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Our Intelligence Agencies

All Presidents have been misled at one time or another by faulty intelligence reports. President Nixon has been irritated in recent months by two examples of shoddy intelligence work.

Last November, inferior intelligence resulted in the abortive prison camp raid at Son Tay, North Vietnam. The staging of the raid was an example of fine planning, but the raiders found no American prisoners to rescue. The prisoners had been shifted elsewhere and our intelligence sources failed to report the move.

The incursion into Laos earlier this year by the South Vietnamese Army met massive resistance, all because our intelligence sources failed to pick up Hanoi's moves to implement forces in the field in Laos.

President Nixon is now said to be considering a major reorganization of the nation's foreign intelligence activities to improve output and cut costs. There are several options the President can follow. One is the creation of a Cabinet-level department of intelligence. Another is strengthening the authority of the director of the Cen-

tral Intelligence Agency over the global operations of the Pentagon and other intelligence agencies.

The United States has a far-flung intelligence network that costs taxpayers about \$5 billion annually to maintain. Many Presidents have bemoaned the fact that intelligence reporting has been rather erratic despite the money pumped into the program.

The Central Intelligence Agency is the largest of the agencies specializing in intelligence activities. But there are other bureaus performing similar services, five of them with overseas ties. At least 200,000 are employed in the intelligence agencies.

Many observers feel the President must take action through an executive order defining the authority of Richard Helms, director of the CIA. The authority of Helms is rather imprecise at this point. The move could strengthen the CIA director's authority over such intelligence-gathering agencies as the Pentagon, State Department and Federal Bureau of Investigation. Whether such a solution is a viable one would remain to be seen.